

My country

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Our Country Our Country, the Union of Myanmar, is known as the land of golden pagodas. Myanmar is surrounded by big countries like China in the north and India and Bengladish to the west. Thailand and laos lie to the east of Myanmar and the south is the east of Myanmar and the south is the sea. Its area is about 676553 square kilometers, and it is the second largest country in Southeast Asia after Indonesia. Although it is still a developing country, we can say it has good neighbours, great resources and beautiful natural surroundings.

And, Myanmar is divided into seven states and seven divisions. There are althogether 135 ethnic groups, like Kachin, Kayar, Kayin, Chin, Bamar, Mon, Rakhine, Shan, Palaung, Paoh and different races like Chinese and Indians, living in unity. Our country is situated near the Bay of Bengal, it has monsoon climate. It is colder in the north than in the south, and the central region is dry. It has three separated seasons, the hot season, the rainy season and the cold season (winter). Each season lasts about four months.

The hot season begins in February and ends in May. The rainy season is from June to September. The cold season starts in October and ends is January. The hot season is the most unfavourable season in our country as it is the most unpleasant time to live. It is really hot, dry and dusty. The lakes and wells dry up in this season. Leaves fall from trees, making some trees bare with dry branches till the middle of the season. New buds come out after that and make them look pleasant thought.

People have to cool themselves in various ways using fans, air-cons, and travelling and staying in summer resorts like Pyin Oo Lwin and Kalaw. In

spite of the annoying heat, there are festivals like Water Festival, Kason water Sprinkling Festival and Pagoda Festival, which can release the people from the extreme weather. The Thingyan is one of the most enjoyable festivals in this season. After the hot season, it is the rainy season. In this season, it is very wet and some places are very muddy. The trees and leaves turn very green as their original colour returns when the dust is removed.

Sometimes, it is very frightening because of the thunder, lightning, storms and floods. But, farmers expect the rain to start growing paddy, and rainwater is essential for everyone to live. The next season to come is the cold season. It is quite pleasant and cold in most parts of our country.

Flowers bloom beautifully under the mist and fruits and vegetables are abundant in this season. People take exercise and walk in the early morning to get fresh air. Sporting events like marathon, running and walking races are held throughout the world.

Religious Lighting Festival, Tazaungdine also falls in this season and it is very delightful to see the surroundings with colourful lights. After enjoying the Christmas festival and hailing the new year, our Independence Day tournaments which are also full of fun and merry-making arrive on the fourth of January. It is the best time of the year in our country as the weather is neither hot nor wet. Our country has four important rivers, called the Ayeyarwady, the Chinwin, the Thanlwin and the Sittaung. They are a great help in transportation and make it possible to grow different kinds of crops.

As our country is an agricultural country, we grow rice, and crops the whole year round, and export rice, beam, prawns and fishes. It is also full of mineral

resources like Jade, sapphire, ruby, gold, silver and various kinds of metal. Myanmar pearl is also world famous for its quality. In the forests, we have abundant supply of teak, ironwood and other kinds of hard wood. Myanmar woven clothes and handicrafts like tapestries, lacquerwares, sculptures of various kinds of wood and other wares also reflect the culture of Myanmar people.

The national museum, Planetarium Yangon Zoological garden, Hlawga Wildlife park, Aquarium lakes, amusement parks, natural caves, waterfalls, bird sanctuaries, mountain resorts, summer resorts, various creeks and rivers and botanical gardens are the countless attraction of Myanmar, our country. However, as it was once a colony of the British and the Japanese the people were influenced by different missions of different religions So, there are some Christians, Hindus and Muslims. But, our country have independent since 1954. So, the other religions live together peacefully under the teachings of different religions So, one can see various sizes, styles and shapes of pagodas, images, monasteries, churches, temples and mosques everywhere in our country, Myanmar. The capital of our country is Yangon and, Mandalay is the second largest city and the last capital of Myanmar kings. Naypyitaw is also the large and important city for our country. Bagan is the most famous places with thousands of pagodas. It is very attractive for all people because we can see most of the religious relics and buildings. It is also attractive for foreigners because it has ancient culture, arts and crafts.

Bagan is situated on the east bank of the Ayeyarwady in central Myanmar. It is about 5 kilometers south of Nyaung Oo. Its area is about 16 square miles and it has a hot and dry climate. It was the capital of the Myanmar kingdom
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during the Bagan dynasty which was from 11th to 13th centuries. It became the centre of Buddhism after King Anawrahta attacked Thaton in 1057 and brought to Bagan the Buddhist monk, Shin Araham, the sacred Pitakas and the sacred Pali language. Bagan has always been famous for its ancient pagodas and monuments and is recognized by the world's travellers as one of the world's wonders.

The architecture and the artistry of the craftsmen show Myanmar's wonderful achievement in arts and crafts. The lacquaware of Bagan is still very much in use, and stands as a traditional attraction for all of us. There are also places of interest like the Bagan Archaeological Museum, the Myanmar handicraft shops and many other antique shops. Today, Bagan has become a tourist attraction because of its archeological sites and unspoilt beauty. It is such an attractive place for both natives and foreigners. The Shwedagon Pagoda is the most ancient historical pagoda in Myanmar.

The history of the Shwedagon says that the Gotama Buddha gave eight hair relics to the two brothers, Taphussa and Ballika, who went to India as traders. They brought the relics to their hometown, Okkalapa, now known as Yangon. They gave the sacred relics to the king of Okkalapa. The king and the citizen built the first pagoda in Myanmar. This pagoda, known as the Shwedagon, enshrines not only the eight hair relics of Gotama Buddha but also the relics of Kakusam Buddha, Konagan Buddha and Kassapa Buddha. So, it is regarded as the most sacred pagoda. This pagoda was rebuilt and enlarged by later kings.

The last person to rebuilt the pagoda to the present size and shape was Queen Shin Saw Pu. The pagoda is 326 feet tall and its circumference at the base is 1420 feet. Its festival is celebrated every year in the last month of the Myanmar calendar called Tabaung. It is celebrated for seven days culminating on the full-moon day of Tabaung. The Pagoda is covered with gold from top to bottom. It glitters in the sun-light like solid gold. It is well known not only in Myanmar but also in the whole world and many pilgrims from all over Myanmar as well as from abroad have visited the Shwedagon.

There are also many other places of interest in Myanmar, our country. Inlay is one of the most beautiful places in Myanmar. Most of the people who live there are Shans, Pa-ohs, and Danus. They are hospitable and honest. Inlay is a big lake with floating islands. Various kinds of vegetables are grown there. Vegetables are fresh, cheap and plentiful. People in Inlay have a market day every five days. It is very crowded with people selling and buying all kinds of goods, in moving boats. Their lives in boats are very interesting. There are only two places in the world where people row the boats with their legs.

One is in Venice, Italy and the other is in Inlay. That is why Inlay is known as Venice of the east. As it is in Shan State, the weather is cool and pleasant. We can also enjoy ourselves by taking a motor boat ride on the lake. It is very exciting to feed the sea-gulls from a moving boat because they sometimes bite our fingers. The famous Phaung Daw Oo Pagoda is in Inlay so we can go on a pilgrimage there. Its festival is held in October and people from all over the country go there to pay homage to the images of Buddha. There are many beautiful and pleasant places which are worth visiting and seeing in Myanmar.

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Pyin Oo Lwin is a hill station. It is 42 miles from Mandalays. The sight of the blue mountains and green valleys along the way is pleasant. It is a quiet town with beautiful gardens. The streets are clean and less crowded and there is hardly any noisy traffic except in the town centre. The atmosphere is peaceful and the climate is pleasant. It is refreshing to go for a walk in the early morning. It is cold during the winter months and cool in summer months. In the evening, the breeze often brings its sweet smell, and the air is clean. Fruits and vegetables are cheap and plentiful the whole year round.

The main attraction of Pyin Oo Lwin is the famous National Kandawgyi Garden. There, we can see real natural beauty and different varieties of the most beautiful and colourful flowers in Myanmar. The Pwe Kauk water fall is the place where families have their meals enjoying the beautiful views. We can go on to visit the Maha Arnthtoo Kantha Pagoda and pay homage to the Buddha image. Many visitors take photographs at the Peit Chin Hmyaung Cave which is the pride and wonder of the town, Pyin Oo Lwin. The cool breeze and the beautiful landscape attract many holiday - makers.

Natural beaches like Ngapali, Ngwe Saung, Kan Thar Yar, Chaung Thar and Maungmakan are also natural unspoilt places where we can get perfect peace and relax ourselves. Myanmar's are carefree and fun-loving people. So, there are many festivals in our country for the whole year round. Among them, the Thingyan Festival is the most famous and the year's greatest event. It is also the most enjoyable festival in our country. The Thingyan marks the end of the old year and welcomes a new one. It usually last for three or four days. During the festival, people throw water on one another. It means washing away the impurities of the old year.

People of different ages, young and old, take part in it. People set up pandals or stages and throw water and revellers who go round the city in open cars. Most of the revellers are teenagers and children get lots of fun, playing in the wet. Water-throwing, shouting and teasing are accepted as a natural process during Thingyan. People get into a forgiving mood and even mere strangers treat each other as long-lost brothers. No one seems to be angry for being wet. We can watch many stage shows and dance shows everywhere. It is not only a time for doing good things. Old people go to pagodas and monasteries to meditate or keep Sabbath.

Young people wash the hair of the elders and cut their nails. Most people avoid doing bad things during this period. The whole country is alive with fun and activities. Thingyan is the festival in which we can get the greatest fun for the longest period. The Myanmar people are kind, hospital and generous. They are also simple, honest, helpful and friendly. In fact, they are peace-loving people. It has an international air-port and a beautiful port for ocean lines. It is also the gateway into Myanmar. We can be proud of our tradition and culture, and Myanmar is self sufficient. It also produces building materials such as wood and bamboo.

There are also many scenic places and pleasant beaches which are very attractive for tourists. People in our country love, regarded by foreigners as helpful, smiling and even easy-going people mistakenly. In fact, Myanmar people are simple and loving. They are also hardworking. Although Myanmar is a developing country, there are a lot of natural resources that we haven't explored and places of interest to be renovated and attract the tourists. With the improvement of moderntechnology, we will be able to discover all these

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and apply for the all-round development of our country, Myanmar. Presented by, 2 GC - 19 Ma Hnin Ei Khaing TU (HINTHATA)